

Pres Vance, Cyrus R.

Washington Whispers®

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The White House and State Department were more annoyed than disturbed by the proposal of U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, to "negotiate" U. S. troops out of Vietnam. In effect, he called for an international conference to decide how the U. S. should "withdraw gracefully," not *whether* it should.

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U. S. would prefer not to take advice from the United Nations in a conflict the U. N. has been no help in settling—especially since that organization's U Thant hasn't succeeded notably in straightening out the U. N.'s own muddled affairs.

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President Johnson is breathing new life into the National Security Council, relying on it far more than President Kennedy did. Mr. Johnson seems to be swinging back to President Eisenhower's opinion that the Council should be used more as a supreme decision-making body.

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Robert McNamara, instead of pledging himself to stay on until 1969, is said to have agreed to continue as President Johnson's Secretary of Defense on a year-to-year basis.

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People close to Cyrus R. Vance, now No. 2 in the Defense Department, let it be known that Mr. Vance is not interested in becoming Director of the Central Intelligence Agency if John A. McCone retires. Mr. Vance would prefer moving to Secretary of Defense, should that post open up.

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Under the surface, there is deep resentment in official U. S. agencies over the attitude of European allies toward the troubles of the U. S. dollar. Said one high official: "After all we did to help Europe and the world through the Marshall Plan and other programs, with defense spending and support for the Common Market—despite all this, these very instruments have been turned against us."

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Lyndon Johnson is being told that any hopes of ending the military draft are fading, particularly in view of the war in Vietnam. The reason: Pentagon studies indicate that an all-volunteer force would fall about a million men short of estimated needs over the next five years.

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Incredible as it may seem, a flying submarine is under active study at the Pentagon. Both Navy and Air Force are working on the idea. Some officials expect a working model to be ready by 1970.

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A U. S. psychological-warfare unit distributed in Vietnam a propaganda calendar that, by mistake, contained only one month. Communists were quick to ask: "Are the Americans planning to desert Vietnam when the month is up?"

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Latin-American diplomats are beginning to wonder if President Johnson ever will get around to that South American trip he planned. Many of them make no secret of their feeling that Vice President Humphrey, rather than Mr. Johnson, would make the biggest hit down there.